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CRITICAL NOTICES.

DR. KRAUSKOPF ON THE OBERAMMERGAU PLAY.

A Rabbi's Impressions of the Oberammergau Passion Play: by
Dr. JOSEPH KRAUSKOPF. (Philadelphia, 1901.)

THIS book consists of six addresses on the subject of the Oberammergau Passion Play, together with three supplemental chapters which set forth at greater length some leading statements laid down by the author. The addresses were given in Dr. Krauskopf's synagogue at Philadelphia, but unlike most sermons they well deserved publication. They are fresh, stimulating and suggestive; here and there we come across passages of genuine rhetorical power. They illustrate the delightful freedom of the American Jewish pulpit; at the same time they emphatically disprove some of the fabulous nonsense which is commonly reported as to the "sort of things which Dr. Krauskopf is wont to say." Christianity is freely discussed; the texts are taken both from the Old and New Testaments; Jesus is spoken of with high reverence and honour; at the end a strong liberal or reform position is taken up; but sermons more emphatically Jewish it would be impossible to find.

Christians of every school would disagree with most of the author's conclusions. Unitarians as well as Trinitarians would deny the validity of his criticism and the accuracy of his main results. I myself have grave doubts whether the life of Jesus and the rise of Christianity are to be explained and accounted for upon Dr. Krauskopf's lines.

Thus our author writes as a Jew and with the most intense Jewish sympathies. In one or two instances even he has not (to my mind) quite freed himself from the common ruck of Jewish prepossession about the New Testament and Jesus. But yet any open-minded Christian would read his book with interest and pleasure. It is throughout written in a spirit of tolerance and respect. Dr. Krauskopf puts his own case strongly; he speaks out in no uncertain voice (and well he may) about the calumnies and bitter persecutions from which

the Jews have suffered and are suffering, but for himself good will, forbearance and brotherly love are his watchwords; these are the qualities which he desires to see prevail and it is to advance *their* cause that his book was written.

The central object of the addresses is to give the true and historical account of the brief events which culminated in the crucifixion, and to contrast this both with the inaccurate statements of the Gospels and with the scenic representation of those statements in the Oberammergau play. Dr. Krauskopf wants to show that Pilate and the Romans have been unhistorically whitewashed while the Jews with equal falsity have been blackened and maligned. He wishes to prove that the death of Jesus was due exclusively to the Romans and that the Jews had no hand in it. He holds that the teaching of Jesus was not opposed to the teaching of the Rabbis, that the attacks upon them, put by the Gospel writers into his mouth, are unhistorical, that there was no violent hatred on either side, that the Judas story is a concoction of impossibilities, and that Jesus, when he saw that his cause was hopeless and that the messianic expectations in which he had only gradually grown to believe through the enthusiasm of his followers, were a baseless delusion, voluntarily surrendered himself into the hands of the Romans.

It is needless to say that though Dr. Krauskopf makes several acute and damaging criticisms of the traditional story, he does not go anywhere near to proving his own version of the case. That would need not a small collection of sermons, without footnotes and references, but a long volume with all the paraphernalia of scholarship and learning. Till Dr. Krauskopf produces such a volume he cannot hope to make any impression upon the orthodox position. It is no good to say that "his sources are at the command of all and his conclusions can be weighed and tested by all" (p. 13). Conclusions without the evidence are of little value and will be but little regarded. It is an inversion of the regular order of things when Dr. Krauskopf "asks for disproof" of the various statements which he has made. It is for him to disprove the ordinary view; not for the supporters of the ordinary view to disprove his as yet unsupported assertions. I do not by any means desire to imply that the ordinary view (in any one of its endless modifications) is right or that Dr. Krauskopf's view is wrong, but only that what is wanted is an elaborate book, not a few sermons, even though they be, as doubtless they are, the outcome of wide reading and patient investigation. Our author cannot surely suppose that the ordinary view is so hopeless and so ridiculous that a popular volume of 216 small pages and large print is sufficient to overthrow it?

It may be questioned whether Dr. Krauskopf does not exaggerate the wickedness of the rôle assigned to the Jews in the Gospels (at any rate in the Synoptics), and perhaps also whether he does not exaggerate the effect of that representation in modern times in the more civilized countries of the West. For even if the Gospel narrative be true, we might still argue that the Jews were essentially in the right. Has not modern criticism largely excused them? It has shown that even though the new conception of a suffering Messiah whose kingdom is not of this world be higher than the old conception, the two are radically different, and that it was the second which was foretold in the Old Testament and not the first. It has also shown that none of the Biblical passages on which Jesus is made to rely for the truth of his claims could possibly have referred to him. Again, if Jesus did assert or admit that he was the "Son of God" in a special or peculiar sense, the assertion or admission was blasphemy to those who did not believe in it. As the proofs of his messiahship were wanting or false, why should any one have believed in his Divinity? And why, with their intense and passionate monotheism, should not the Jews have shown their hatred of a blasphemer? Hence though there is doubtless a great deal of exaggeration, of theatrical effect and of designed contrast between light and darkness, good and bad, in the alleged behaviour of the Jews at the catastrophe at Jerusalem, the main outlines seem to me neither antecedently improbable nor morally atrocious. Human nature being what it is, these main outlines, as we may conceive them to have actually occurred, seem to me neither unnatural nor deserving of unqualified condemnation. Doubtless the fact or the supposed fact that the Jews crucified the Son of God, the World's Redeemer, has had an enormous deal to do with the vile treatment they have received from Christian peoples, with the prejudices and hatred under which they have suffered, and with the atrocious persecutions they have undergone and still undergo¹. But even this fact or supposed fact is happily not strong enough to prevent justice and good feeling, just as, if it were not for many other concurrent causes, it would not probably, even in Austria and Germany, be strong enough in its irrationality to secure the maintenance of an uncivilized and deplorable Anti-Semitism. In England, a judicial murder (let us assume it to be so) committed nineteen hundred years ago happily does not prevent the most excellent fellow feeling and good will. Here at least it would be untrue to say, "we came in contact and yet are distant; we are branded, distrusted, ostracized" (p. 138). I should hope that it is

¹ As things are in Roumania, for instance, "atrocious" is too light and insignificant a word.

equally untrue of every English speaking community where Jews are to be found.

One of the most excellent things about Dr. Krauskopf's book is the clear and ingenious way in which the author weaves his New Testament criticisms and his capital descriptions of the play together. In the first five sermons (pp. 17-133) we are never allowed to forget that we are listening to some one who has been to Oberammergau, and that his immediate purpose is to give us a description, as well as impressions, of what he actually saw and heard. It is no mere dry criticism therefore which the preacher gives us; no mere assertions of what he conceives the course of events to have actually been, but while these criticisms and assertions are in a sense the real object of the whole book, they are apparently subordinated to the impressions and description. The total result makes very good reading and leaves a pleasing effect upon the mind.

This is not the place and I am not the man to criticize adequately our author's main position. Dr. Krauskopf puts forward his conclusions with great confidence, but as I have already said, the evidence upon which they are based is necessarily wanting. A few unguarded statements, such as those about the dates of the Gospels, arouse occasional suspicion. Dr. Krauskopf must surely know that 70 to 80 A.C. is the commonly accepted date for the Gospel of Mark, and that from 30 to 80 is only 50 years. Of course our author is perfectly at liberty to say that he does not adopt this date, but in that case he must give us elaborate proof, and no mere assertion, that the "ordinary view" is wrong. I will only add a personal doubt with regard to Dr. Krauskopf's estimate of the teaching of Jesus. Here our author takes up and even exaggerates a favourite Jewish line. Whatever Jesus says in favour of the Law and of the Rabbis is true and authentic; passages which point the other way are "unhistorical." He admires Jesus highly. "I will yield to none," he says, "in recognizing the civilizing influence of the man of Nazareth; I am ready to bestow on him as high a tribute as any one has yet bestowed; if I cannot say that it was he who made divinity human, I am ready to rank him among the foremost of those who have made humanity divine" (p. 43). And again, "There has probably never been a Christian who has studied the life of the preacher and teacher of Nazareth with greater reverence than I have, or who values his real teachings more highly than I do" (p. 151). Nevertheless Jesus "never preached a doctrine, advocated a reform, that was not strictly Jewish" (p. 145). "There was nothing that Jesus ever preached or taught that had not the heartiest endorsement of the Rabbis of Israel. Not a precept had he ever uttered that had not proven him a Hebrew

of the Hebrews. His every word breathes of the religious and moral and social atmosphere of his time. His every act is the translation into deed of the aspirations of the pious and cultured Jew in the days of Palestine's bondage under the cruel Roman. His every declaration to the people is a restatement of his fundamental position that he had not come to make common cause with the Gentile, but to preach to Israel; that he had not come to antagonize or to destroy, but to fulfil; that he had not come to remove as much as a jot or tittle of the Law and the prophets, but to preserve their institutions and to conserve their spirit. His every admonition to the people was a reiteration of the teaching of Moses to worship the One God, and to love him with all their heart and soul and mind, and to love their neighbours as themselves. His every teaching with regard to the Scribes and Rabbis, members of the Sanhedrin, was that they sit in Moses' seat, and whatsoever they bid that should be done. His very manner of teaching, his aphorisms and quotations, his parables and illustrations, is the manner of the Rabbis of his time. Not a reform principle that he taught, which they had not taught; not a ceremonial abuse to which he objected, which they had not objected to; not an ethical lesson that he enjoined, which they had not enjoined; not a prayer that he offered, which they had not offered; the very 'Lord's Prayer' was a specimen of the kind of prayer they prayed; the very 'Golden Rule' was the rule taught in every school" (p. 73).

After all this it is not surprising that Dr. Krauskopf holds that "there is not one word of truth in all these trumped up charges against the Rabbis, in all the Gospel-recorded bitterness of Jesus against the Scribes and Pharisees, or of the Scribes and Pharisees against Jesus" (p. 75). For "if ever there was a time when peace was needed among Israel itself, that was the time; and if ever there was a man to knit the people in closest bond of mutual sympathy and helpfulness in the hour of the country's direst distress, Jesus was that man. Not he the man to brand the teachers of his people 'hypocrites,' 'scorpions,' 'whited sepulchres.' There was not enough of gall in him to force such words to his lips. He who preached to love the enemy, to bless those that curse, to do good to those that harm, to resist no evil, certainly could not harm or curse them that had not harmed or cursed. This bitter denunciation of the teachers of Israel is the language of the later-day Romanized vindictive theologians of the church militant. From his earliest childhood, at his mother's breast, he had drunk in the Jew's reverence of the teacher in Israel, of the judge who judges in God's stead; and in all his studies of the history of Israel he had not come across a time

when the teachers of Israel were more deserving of reverence than in that age that produced a Philo, a Hillel, a Gamaliel, a Jochanan ben Saccai" (p. 64).

I venture with all deference to doubt the accuracy of these statements. The Jesus of Dr. Krauskopf might have been a milder and gentler man than the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels, but, in spite of Paul, such a Jesus was not and could not have been the founder of Christianity. Not even all the "parallels" drawn up by Dr. Krauskopf between Talmud and New Testament (the dates and contexts of which would, by the way, need careful examination) will suffice to destroy the originality of the "man of Nazareth." Without a Jesus, who in life and tenets was not a mere replica of any other contemporary Rabbi, the Gospels are an even greater puzzle than before. If Jewish critics of the New Testament are still bent upon proving that the teaching of Jesus as a whole, both upon its positive and its negative side, for both are almost equally important, and taken in close connexion with his life, contains no originality, no departure or deflection from the current and average Rabbinic teaching and practice, their labours are, I fear, doomed to sterility. Dr. Krauskopf can "reverence" Jesus; but while Amos may be original, Jesus must be only an instance. When will the next step be taken?

Of the three supplemental addresses the third on "Paul—the founder and spreader of Christology" is the most interesting. Dr. Krauskopf gives a clever and impartial sketch of Paul's principles and work, and he writes with perhaps as much accuracy as excessive brevity will allow. The last few sentences well sum up the author's position both as regards Judaism and Christianity.

"With all Paul's faults, with all the injuries his Christology has wrought, we have more reason to be grateful to him than we have cause for censure. As Jews, we are indebted to him for spreading the ethics of Judaism among a Gentile world, for doing for the cause of Israel what never was done by Jew before or since, for showing us how, by the removal of obsolete, meaningless and repellent ceremonies, rites and observances, Judaism, pure and simple, might be made a world-conquering religion. As members of civilized society, we owe him unstinted praise for coming to the rescue of Gentile peoples, at a time when they most needed his aid, and for showing countless successors the way in which light, cheer and comfort, faith, hope and charity, may be introduced in a benighted and a cruel world. And each of us may draw from Paul's epoch-making life and deeds the inspiration of independent thought and courageous daring, fearless of the consequences that may ensue. Each Jew may draw from the

results of his labours the hope that the compromise that could not be effected eighteen centuries ago may yet be brought about. The spirit of our age greatly favours such a compromise. What the Christian world needs is another Jew, to complete the Trinity of Jewish Reformers, one who shall combine within himself the moral and religious purity of Jesus and the zeal and energy of Paul. He will be the long expected Messiah. His coming will constitute the Second Advent of the Nazarene Master. The time for his coming is drawing nigh. Obsolete forms and meaningless rites are crumbling away. Offensive doctrines are disappearing. The Judaic Jesus is slowly regaining his lost ground. The Ethics of Judaism are gradually supplanting the Gnosticism of Paul. When the Jew shall have completely cast away his obstructive exclusiveness and ceremonialism, and the Christian his Christology, Jew and Gentile will be one."

The desire expressed for the new Jewish Reformer who shall be the "long expected Messiah" is a piece of rhetoric or a metaphor. But the underlying thought is brave and clear. Would that such free and fearless utterances, whether we entirely agree with them or not, were spoken from the pulpits of English synagogues as well as in America.

C. G. MONTEFIORE.

ABBÉ LOISY'S "ÉTUDES BIBLIQUES."

Études Bibliques: par ALFRED LOISY (Paris, 1901).

La Religion d'Israël: par ALFRED LOISY (Paris, 1901).

THESE are two small but important pamphlets by a distinguished Roman Catholic scholar and theologian. The second consists mainly of a very clear historical sketch of the origin and development of the Jewish religion; the former, to which I shall here confine myself, is a collection of six essays bearing upon the Inspiration of Scripture and upon Biblical Criticism. Their object, according to the Abbé Loisy's short preface, is "the reconciliation of Catholic dogma and discipline with the scientific study of the Bible."

We are by this time quite familiar with an attempted alliance between Protestant faith and the "higher criticism." The critical "results" which are accepted as consonant with and indeed con-